

## Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 052699

FOR MONTVILLE FROM PALMER

FOL RPT MOSCOW 03149 ACTION SECSTATE INFO AMMAN BAGHDAD CAIRO  
DAMASCUS JIDDA LONDON PARIS SINAI TEHRAN TEL AVIV TRIPOLI  
USUN NEW YORK DIA WASHDC BEIRUT 28 FEB 78 QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 03149

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1  
TAGS: PEPR, UR, SY  
SUBJECT: SYRIAN EMBASSY BRIEFING ON ASAD VISIT TO MOSCOW

REF: MOSCOW 2826

SUMMARY: SYRIAN EMBASSY DCM GIVES POSITIVE ASSESSMENT  
TO "POLITICAL" VISIT OF ASAD, SAYS SOVIET ECONOMIC DEL  
WILL LEAVE SOON FOR TALKS IN DAMASCUS ON ACCELERATION OF  
ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE PROJECTS, AND REFUSES TO ADMIT THAT  
SYRIANS GAVE UP ANYTHING OF SUBSTANCE IN EXCHANGE FOR  
ARMS AND ECONOMIC AID. END SUMMARY.

1. POL COUNSELOR RECEIVED FEB. 27 BRIEFING ON ASAD  
VISIT BY SYRIAN DCM CHOUERI. DURING DISCUSSION CHOUERI  
MADE FOLLOWING POINTS:

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-- VISIT WAS PRIMARILY "POLITICAL" IN NATURE. TECHNICAL  
ECONOMIC AND MILITARY TALKS WILL BE HELD LATER AS INDICATED  
BY ASAD IN HIS AIRPORT DEPARTURE COMMENTS (REFTEL).  
IN THIS REGARD A SOVIET DELEGATION LED BY GKES (SOVIET  
AID ORGANIZATION) CHAIRMAN SKACHKOV WILL LEAVE FOR  
DAMASCUS ON MARCH 6 TO DISCUSS AN "ACCELERATION" OF SOVIET  
ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE.

2. -- SYRIANS DIFFERED WITH SOVIETS OVER BOTH GENEVA CONFERENCE AND EVENTS IN HORN. BUT SOVIETS WERE NOT INSISTENT ON EITHER SUBJECT AND BOTH SIDES SIMPLY LAID OUT THEIR RESPECTIVE POSITIONS. DURING TALKS, SYRIANS SPOKE IN GENERAL TERMS OF "LIBERATION MOVEMENTS" IN AFRICA, BY WHICH THEY MEANT SOMALI ACTIVITY IN OGADEN AND ERITREAN MOVEMENT. NOTHING WAS SAID ABOUT SYRIAN OCCUPATION OF LEBANON.

3. -- SYRIANS FELT COMFORTABLE WITH COMMUNIQUE REFERENCE TO TRIPOLI AND ALGIERS MEETINGS AND TO ARAB FRONT AGAINST IMPERIALISM, ZIONISM, AND SEPARATE DEALS. SOVIETS HAD SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL NEGATIVE REFERENCE TO "REACTIONARY ARAB STATES", I.E., SAUDIA ARABIA, BUT DID NOT STRONGLY RESIST WHEN SYRIANS DEMURRED. SYRIAN SIDE SUGGESTED COMMUNIQUE LINE ON SOVIET PARTICIPATION "IN ALL STAGES" OF M.E. SETTLEMENT, BUT SYRIANS CLEARLY HAD IN MIND FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS IN GENEVA OR OTHER UN CONTEXT AND NOT SOVIET INVOLVEMENT IN INTER-ARAB DISCUSSIONS A LA TRIPOLI AND ALGIERS. COMMENT. AUSTRIAN EMBASSY DCM SIEGEL GOT IMPRESSION FROM HIS TALK WITH CHOUERI THAT SYRIANS AND OTHER RECENT ARAB VISITORS HAD ARGUED AGAINST COMMUNIQUE REFERENCES TO GENEVA ON GROUNDS THAT SUCH REFERENCES WOULD GIVE SADAT A LOOPHOLE TO PUSH FOR GENEVA IF HIS CURRENT EFFORTS FAIL. IN OTHER WORDS THESE ARABS AND  
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SOVIETS WANT SADAT'S PROSPECTIVE FAILURE TO BE COMPLETE. END COMMENT. THERE WAS NO DISCUSSION OF IRAQI ROLE IN CURRENT ARAB EFFORTS TO COORDINATE ACTIVITIES NOR WAS THERE ANY TALK OF SYRIAN-IRAQI BILATERAL DIFFERENCES.

4. -- THERE WAS NO MEETING IN SOVIET UNION BETWEEN JALLUD AND ASAD. ONE SOVIET SOURCE SPECULATED TO CHOUERI THAT JALLUD EXTENDED HIS STAY FOR MEDICAL/REST REASONS. WIDE-SPREAD RUMORS OF IMPENDING ARAFAT VISIT TO MOSCOW ARE PLAUSIBLE, BUT POSSIBLE DATES ARE NOT KNOWN.

5. COMMENT. CHOUERI SEEMED TO REFLECT GENUINE SATISFACTION WITH RESULTS OF VISIT. HE SMILINGLY ACKNOWLEDGED INCREASED SOVIET MILITARY ASSISTANCE WITHOUT, HOWEVER, PROVIDING DETAILS AND HE NOTED "ACCELERATION" OF SOVIET ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. HE DID NOT FEEL THAT SYRIANS HAD GIVEN UP ANYTHING IN RETURN. LANGUAGE ON HORN WAS AMBIGUOUS, HE SAID, AND EMPHASIS ON SOVIET ROLE IN M.E. WAS, FROM SYRIAN STANDPOINT, NO MORE THAN STATEMENT OF REALITY.

6. EGYPTIAN CHARGE, FAROUK SHELBYA, ON OTHER HAND, TOOK OPPOSITE STANCE DURING CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF ON FEB. 26. SHELBYA FELT THAT, WHILE SYRIANS MIGHT TRY TO EXPLAIN AWAY COMMUNIQUE LANGUAGE FAVORABLE TO SOVIETS,

SAUDIS, FOR ONE, WOULD BE EXTREMELY CRITICAL AND EVEN  
SYRIANS MIGHT FIND SOVIETS USING AGREED UPON LANGUAGE  
AS POLITICAL LEVER AGAINST SYRIANS IN FUTURE; FOR  
EXAMPLE, SHOULD ASAD WISH TO REOPEN DIALOGUE WITH  
AMERICANS.

7. BOTH SHELBAYA AND CHOUERI WERE ASKED IF THEY HAD ANY  
INKLING OF NEW SOVIET M.E. PEACE INITIATIVE OR OF SOVIET  
SUPPORTED INITIATIVE ON PART OF STAND-FAST FRONT. BOTH  
GAVE NEGATIVE RESPONSE. SHELBAYA, WHO HAD HAD ROUNDTABLE  
DISCUSSION WITH NUMBER OF MFA NEAR EASTERN COUNTRIES  
BUREAU OFFICERS ON FEB. 14, SAID SOVIET ATTITUDE COULD  
BE SUMMARIZED AS "WHAT CAN WE DO?", AN ADMISSION IN HIS  
EYES OF CONTINUED SOVIET BELIEF THAT U.S. DID INDEED  
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HOLD 90 PERCENT OF M.E. CARDS IN ITS HANDS. MATLOCK  
UNQUOTE VANCE

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## Message Attributes

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